

A 693 d
S E R M O N

Preach'd at

The Royal Chappel at
White-Hall;

On *Asb-Wednesday*, Feb. 26, 178⁶₁.

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Amos, Chap. 7. ver. 10, 12, 13.

Then Amaziah the Priest of Bethel, sent to Jeroboam King of Israel, saying, Amos hath Conspired against thee in the midst of the House of Israel: The Land is not able to bear all his Words.--- Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O Thou Seer, go flee thee away into the Land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesie there.--- But prophesie not again any more at Bethel, for it is the King's Chappel, and it is the King's Court.

L O N D O N,

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C. King, at the *Judge's Head*, both in *Westminster-Hall*,
1707.

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Revelations, Chap. III. Ver. 2, 3.

II. *Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to Dye: for I have not found thy Works perfect before God.*

III. *Remember therefore how thou hast received, and heard, and hold fast, and repent.*

THESE Words are part of an Epistle, dictated by the Spirit of God to the Church of *Sardis*, of which we know little more, than what we find recorded here; That it was one of those Planted by the Apostles, which had a great Name amongst other Churches; yet had so fallen from the Life, Energy, and Spirit of Christianity, that in the Eyes of the Almighty, it seem'd rather to be dead to every Good Work, than alive to any true Christian purpose.

It seems to have Lost, not only the *Power*, but the very *Form of Godliness*; and its very Angels, Watchmen, or Bishops to be sunk into such a Listlessness, Stupidity, or Lethargy, as to need a Voice from Heaven, to rouse them, to put them upon their Watch, to call upon them, to strive with Care and Diligence, to preserve what yet remained amongst them of the Sacred Depositum of Christianity; which in all likelihood, without a more than ordinary Care, and Watchfulness, would soon follow the rest.

The Works of the Church in general, were far from being *perfect before God*; the Worth and Value of their Holy Religion; the Remembrance of God's Mercies to them in several Instances, were forgotten, and lost amongst them; their Zeal and Concern for Christianity were fallen below Lukewarmness. What little poor Pittance of Religion was left amongst them, was so loose, and indifferent to them, that God in his Mercy, calls to them to hold that little Remnant fast, as a Means to retrieve and recover the Rest by; and invites, and excites them in general to Repent of, and Reform from their Stupidity and Apostacy, their Coolness and Indifferency, their Carelessness and Negligence, by assuring them, that if they do not, *He will come upon them as a Thief; and that they shall not know what Hour he will come upon them*; at the same time Comforting the few Members of that Church, who had not defiled their Garments, with an assurance, *that they shall walk with him in White; for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in White Raiment, such shall not have their Names blotted out of the Book of Life, but their Names shall be confessed by the Holy Jesus, before his Father,*

and his Angels. ----- He that hath an Ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches.

Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to dye; for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

Remember therefore how thou hast received, and heard; and hold fast, and Repent.

From this account of the Church of *Sardis*, He that runs may read, and observe in how many particulars, we agree with them in Circumstances; and He that considers them ever so little, must readily acknowledge, that, since God's Methods with Careless, Ungrateful, Dissolute, Backsliding Churches and Nations, are still the same (for our God is the same, Yesterday, to Day, and for Ever.) If we Copy after the Sins of other Churches and Nations, we must expect the same Judgments and punishments from the Divine Justice, which the Scriptures threatned, and afterwards fell on them; unless we suffer the Divine Goodness and Mercy by the Calls of the Holy Spirit, by the Voices of the Scriptures, and the Ministers of the Gospel, to persuade us to a speedy Repentance, and Amendment.

I shall therefore from the State of the Church of *Sardis*, and the Warning and Exhortation to it in my Text, and our own Melancholy, and much to be Lamented Agreement with it, in many particulars, take Occasion,

First, to shew what Qualifications are necessary to make a Work be found perfect before God; and here that many specious Actions wanting, some one or more of these Qualifications, are not found perfect before God.

Secondly, I shall go farther, and point out to you some gross and scandalous Instances, wherein our Works are so far from being found perfect before God, that they are so highly and generally impious and provoking, as to make it all Men's Duty and Interest to call loudly one upon another, to be watchful, and strengthen the Things which remain, and are ready to Die; to remember how we have received and heard, and hold fast and repent, especially at this solemn Time of Fasting and Humiliation, which our Church has set apart for imploring Almighty God, to create and make in us new and contrite Hearts; that we worthily lamenting our Sins, and acknowledging our Wretchedness may obtain of Him, the God of all Mercy, perfect Remission and Forgiveness, through his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

First then, I am to shew what Qualifications are necessary to make a Work perfect before God; and here, that many specious Actions, wanting some one or more of these Qualifications, are not found perfect before God.

By Perfect here, I don't mean void of all Imperfection, or Defect: By Perfect here, I don't mean void of all Imperfection, or Defect:

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would be to look for Heaven upon Earth, to make that the State of this Life, which God hath hath design'd to be the Glory, and Comfort of another.

But by *Perfection*, I mean a *Gospel Sincerity* in all our Actions.

Now, to make our Works *perfect before God*, even in this Sense,

They must be *First* good in themselves.

Secondly, flowing from good Principles; and,

Thirdly, directed to good Purposes.

The want of any one or more of these Qualifications, makes any Work be look'd upon as imperfect before God; and justly deprives a Man of any hope of Reward for it, or of having it accepted of by the Holy One of *Israel*.

And indeed I am afraid, if we bring many of our most specious Actions to this Test, that we shall find them not only imperfect before God, but Men too.

The Mighty Zeal, that some Men pretend for Religion in general, or for the Reform'd Religion in particular, will be found very often but Angling for Praise, or Preferment, or Advantage; setting up for Leading Men, for the Heads of Parties, strengthening themselves with a number of Zealots, and so rendring themselves considerable enough to be courted by the Men in Power; or, in Appearance, Godly enough not to be suspected of any treacherous Designs or Dealings in their Intercourse with the rest of Mankind. When the Ends are thus selfish, knavish, and trickish, there needs no reasoning to prove the Actions perform'd for *these Ends*, however good in themselves, very far from being found perfect before God; but rather exposing the Hypocrite to the Scorn and Contempt of Men, whenever he is discover'd; and to the just Indignation of the Almighty, to whose Eye he always stands naked, and unmask'd.

Again, a great many Actions, flowing from the Dictates of an erroneous Conscience, tho' perform'd with the warmest Zeal, and heartiest Sincerity, will be found not perfect before God.

Such were the Persecutions of the Apostles and Primitive Christians, foretold by our Blessed Saviour, who assur'd them, *the Time should come, when Men should reckon they did God good Service in evil treating, and putting them to Death.*

St. Paul thought himself bound in Conscience to do many things against the Name of Jesus of Nazareth, persecuting his Disciples, even to strange Cities; seeking for, and obtaining Power to seize upon, and bring to Punishment all of that Way.

But we find, he did not think the Error in his Judgment justified the Practice; but proclaims, and has left himself on Record, in his Epistle to Timothy, a Blasphemer, and the greatest of Sinners, for what he once did in Obedience to the Dictates of his Conscience.

A Sermon Preach'd at White-Hall,

Thus a Man in a mistaken Zeal, may think himself oblig'd to make a Separation in the Church ; but the Separation will be nevertheless sinful, tho' he does act according to his Judgment.

It is an Unhappiness, and very often a Punishment upon us for other Sins, when God suffers us to be distracted between our Real, and Mistaken Duty,

For as it is true, that nothing which we think a Sin can be perform'd by us with a good Conscience, or without Offence against God ; because such an Action is a direct Disregard in the Will to, and Breach upon the Authority of God ; so, no Wicked or Sinful Action loses its Nature, or becomes a Virtue, or Innocent, by our thinking it so.

Our Duty lies so near our Sight ; the Nature of Moral Actions is so very obvious ; the Laws and Will of God are so clearly revealed ; the Helps and Assistances, to the discerning, and understanding them, so many ; the Grace of God is so near and forward to assist us ; his Goodness to guide, and lead us into every good Work, if we sincerely apply our selves to him for his Holy Spirit in Prayer ; that nothing but Prejudice, or Passion, or Interest, or Laziness, or Indifference, or a Spiritual Blindness Contracted, and Demerited from Heaven by indulging of our Lusts, can bring a Man into the Miserable Dilemma, of acting either against his Conscience, or his Duty.

Again, we may be sure *We must not do evil, that good may come of it.* We must not rob Houses to build Churches ; much less, rob Churches to raise Families, and make Estates. We must not, out of an irregular Zeal for Religion, or a Concern for its Preservation, run into Rebellion. We must not, like the *Pharisees*, by our *Traditions make the Word of God of none Effect* ; who, amongst other Practices of this sort, taught Men that *consecrating their Substance to the Service of the Temple, dispens'd with the Obligations of the Fifth Commandment.*

It is *Corban*, or a Gift, whereby thou mayst be profited by me, was not allow'd a good Plea by our Blessed Saviour, for the *Jews* neglecting the Support, and Comfort of their necessitous Parents. The Offering in it self was good ; but the Inference from it, and the reason for making it were equally abominable.

Having thus observed and noticed to you very great Imperfections in some of those Actions Men are apt to value themselves upon, I shall lay down three Qualifications, which every Work ought to have to make it acceptable to, and perfect before God : Namely

First, That it be good in it self ;

Secondly, That it flow from a good Principle ; and

Thirdly, That it be directed to a good Purpose. I proceed,

Secondly, to point out to you some gross and scandalous Instances, wherein our Works are so far from being found perfect before God ;

hat they are so highly, and generally impious and provoking, as to make it all Men's Duty and Interest to call loudly one upon another, *To be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, and are ready to die amongst us.*

And here it is not my Intent or Purpose to enumerate and expose the several crying Sins of the Nation, visible enough, God knows, to the most unobserving Eye; but to point out those Sources, and Fountains of Irreligion and Lewdness, from whence the lesser Streams flow, that have almost over-spread the Face of the Land; those Abysses of Impiety, which have been of late broke up, and caused such a Deluge of Wickedness, that even the Ark of God's Church, and the few good People in't, are in danger from the Inundation.

And the first I shall mention, which in its Consequences will take in most of the rest, is the most unaccountable Liberty that has been of late taken, not only in Conversation, but in Books publicly printed and sold about our Streets, in spite of our Bishops and Judges, thrust upon Us, and our People at our Church-Doors, to strike at the very Fundamentals, and weaken the main Springs of Religion in general, and to corrupt or loosen the Principles of Christianity in particular; *viz.* in some we have the *Immortality of the Soul attempted to be disproved*; in others, the *Mysteries of our Holy Religion attacked*; in some, the *Insufficiency, and Defects of the Canon of the Scripture, maliciously and wickedly, tho' weakly expos'd*; and in all the Books writ by the Gentlemen on that side the Question, the *Ordinances and Orders of our God, his Church, and Priests, buffoon'd, ridicul'd*, and with all the Art, and Industry, all the Application and joint Endeavours of Atheistical, Lewd, Prophane Wits render'd, as much as in them lies, not only *little and contemptible*, but *destructive* to dear *Liberty and Property*, the *Diana's* of these **EPHESIANS**; those Popular Goddesses, whose pretended Vindication, so often furnish'd the Craftsmen of **FACTION, SCHISM,** and **REBELLION**, with Power to raise and inspirit the unthinking Populace against God's true Religion, its Orthodox faithful Ministers, and their lawful Governours; an **OLD GAME** too often play'd; and it is well if People have been yet deep enough bit by it, to discourage all other Attempts of that Nature for the future.

I must confess, that some People are so zealous in making Proselytes from *Christianity* to their *No-Religion*; and from *Loyalty* to the *Right of Government in the People*; from *Monarchy* to *Anarchy*, by depriving of, or denying our Sovereign's *Divine Right* to our conscientious Subjection, that it is not hard to foresee what they drive at. One would imagine, by their Practices, they set up for the Apostles of the Devil, Emissaries of the Arch-Rebel, and Apostate *Lucifer*; but from their Principles, which disallow all Rewards and

Punishments hereafter, we have reason to think, they believe themselves secure from *Punishment*, and hope for *Rewards* in this World, for their zealous Discharge of their *Horrid Mission*.

And tho' I hope none, who hear me this Day, are concern'd in the direct Practice, yet I am afraid too many are Partakers of the Sin, by listening to such Discourses, or reading such Books with Pleasure, or Indifference, or at all, without Abhorrence. And it is well, if an habitual Course of *careless*, or *wicked Living*, and from thence a *fearful looking for of Judgment*, according to the Principles of Religion, do not incline a great many to wish, even what they cannot bring themselves to believe to be true.

Nothing but a general Corruption in Manners, a lamentable Disregard for, or Indifference to our Holy Religion, could give Wretches Audaciousness, and Impudence enough, to belch forth such Impieties, deal about such poysonous Principles, avow such horrid Tenets; and so dare the Justice of the Laws, and the Zeal and Power of our Governours in Church and State.

It is the Number, and Grandeur of their Abettors, join'd with the Assurance they have, that a great many more, who lead profligate, loose, or careless Lives; who, tho' not arriv'd to the Pitch of believing what they write, wish well for their own Interest to the Cause, and would be glad to find it prov'd true (which is a large Stride towards believing it) that encourages such *Unchristian Practices*, as no Kingdom under Heaven, professing the Name of Christ, except this, ever suffer'd to go unnoticed, or unpunished.

For the Credit, and everlasting Honour of the Church and Parliament of the *Neighbouring Island*, and with a truly Christian Sorrow and Concern for this, be it remember'd and spoken, Monsters of this Sort, who could not live there, but were prosecuted and driven from thence, find Shelter here.

One, who by a malicious and cunning piece of *Sophistry*, pretended to evince, *that it was only want of true, and lively Faith, which subjected Men to Death*; and thereby slyly attempted to expose, both the *first*, and *second Covenant*; and in short, all *Revealed Religion*; since *Immortality of the Body* was not the Result of Man's Reconciliation to God through Christ, (which he endeavour'd to shew, ought to have been its Consequence from several Texts of Holy Scripture, that he put false glosses on, and miserably perverted) found Abhorrence from the Body of the Nation, Assembled in Parliament there; and was expelled the *House of Commons*, as a *Brand* upon him for the Practice.

Another, who had his Book Burn'd there, by the Hands of the *Common Hangman*, and was himself order'd by the Parliament to be taken into Custody for the *Heresies*, and *Blasphemies*

on Ash-Wednesday, Feb. 26. 1706.

Blasphemies in it, Lives here, not only openly and unpunish'd, but in great Esteem with too many Men, even of Figure, and is, (if the Expression be not below the Dignity of the Place I speak from) the *Cat's Foot of the Party*; tho' I am sorry his Paws have not yet felt the Fire; Revives and Publishes afresh, the most *Republican, Antimonarchical, Antichristian* Treatises, he can rummage up out of those Magazines of *Sedition, and Rebellion, Fanaticism and Hypocrisie*, which brought the purest Church in the Christian World to Desolation, overturn'd the happiest Constitution of Government, and brought our QUEEN's most, Pious and most Glorious Grandfather, our never to be forgotten *Martyr'd Monarch*, to the Scaffold and Block in 48. undermining our Laws, and Religion publicly, and Poisoning the Nation in their Principles in Christianity, and Loyalty.

[EMLIN,] A third, openly Prosecuted and Convicted there, for for Writing against *the Divinity of the Holy Jesus, God Blessed for ever*, has publicly set up, and Preaches in this City to an Assembly or Meeting of Persons of the same Horrid Principles: Notwithstanding, what Men call the *Toleration Act*, Prohibits all Persons to preach or teach, who shall not acknowledge, and profess their firm Belief of the *Divinity of our Saviour*, and the *Doctrine of the Trinity*. I say, what Men call the *Toleration Act*; Because there is not one Word of *Toleration* in that Statute, tho' we are sensible of its Effects, and Consequences to that purpose: That Act takes away some Penalties Inflicted by former Acts on *Dissenters*; but not in the least Repeals, or Weakens one Tittle of the *Act of Uniformity*, which God be praised is Yet in Force. So that if ever there was such a Sin as *Schism* in the World; and any particular Persons, or Bodies of Men, were guilty of it in this Church before the Passing of that Law; they are in the same Condition still, if they continue the Separation.

For the obtaining a Human Law, to take off the Penalties Imposed by Laws of the same Nature, on Actions contrary, not only to the Laws of God, but to other Laws of the Land yet Unrepeal'd, tho' without Penalties, can't be imagin'd to make that no Sin, which is still a Disobedience to the Laws of the Nation, and which God has declared to be a most heinous one, and denounc'd Judgments and Punishments against.

As for Instance, tho' Men should be so Mad as to take off all the Penalties and Punishments in the Law against *Murder*; nay, should they go farther, and Repeal all Laws against it; would *Murder*, from thence-forward cease to be a *damnable Sin*?

Thus, tho' that Law has discharg'd the Members of this National Church from the Penalties, which former Laws, with great Reason and great Piety, had laid upon Persons, who should Schismatically Separate themselves from, and break the *Unity* of this Church; a
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Church we know they can *Communicate* with upon some Occasions to get into Places of Profit, (but that may be to spoil the *Egyptians*) or *Trust*, (but that may be to overthrow the *Tables* they Kneel at) God knows their Hearts; for Men cannot reconcile, or unriddle their Practices: I say, though such Men are discharged from all Penalties, and have Liberty given them, by a New Law, to *divide from the National Established Church* with Impunity, they stand however guilty of the *Schism* still before God, and liable to the *Divine Vengeance* for their Disobedience to his Laws, and the positive Laws of the Land,

I have taken leave to go a little out of the way, to make this Observation; because, generally speaking, People fancy the *Guilt*, and *Danger* of *Schism*, is taken away by a Law that gives them a Latitude of being of what Sect they please without Punishment; when God knows, as I have shown you, the Matter is quite otherwise; and nothing more is done by that Law; but taking down the Fence, which the Wisdom and Piety of former Laws had placed about the Sin: Though I must confess, we see every Day, Men deluded by false Consequences from it, out of the Bosom of the most *Pure* and *Orthodox Church* in the Christian World, by People, who go no longer, only from *House to House*, leading *Captive silly Women*, but publickly Proclaim they have their *Iniquity Establish'd by a Law*, and themselves upon a Level that way with the *National Church*.

But to return to the Melancholy View of the Miserable and languishing Condition of Religion amongst us.

What darkens the Prospect, and makes the Scene more gloomy, and dismal, is the Consideration how far the Infection is spread, and the Body of the Nation tainted, either with *Libertine Principles*, or the *Guilt* of them.

For as there is Misprision of Treason against a Sovereign, where Men are not Principal Actors; and Treachery and Cowardice in Subjects, who desert the Defence of the Honour, and just Rights of the Crown, when they are either undermin'd or attack'd publickly by its Enemies: Highly Punishable in all those, who shrink from their Duty, in such trying Instances of their Fidelity, Loyalty, and Courage, and much more so in those, who are more obliged to Watchfulness, and Zeal, by their High Stations, and Commissions, whereby part of the Sovereign Power is delegated to them, to preserve, and defend the whole:

So, without doubt, the Body of a *Church*, or *Nation*, where the Sovereign Majesty of Heaven, the very Being of the Almighty, his reveal'd and publish'd Will and Laws; his Charters of Grace, and Mercy, Pardon, and Salvation, seal'd to us with the most precious Blood of his dearly Beloved Son, are publickly, and daily attack'd, affronted, and insultingly trampled upon; every Christian, from the highest to the Lowest, from the King on the Throne, to the Beg-

gar on the Dunghil; from the Bishop, to the most inferior Office^r of the Church, contracts a Guilt by bearing, by enduring, or suffering the Practice, without attempting all in their Powers in their several Stations, to repel, discourage, suppress, and severely punish such Blatphemous, Antichristian Actions; such Treasonable Positions, and Declarations against the great King of Heaven and Earth.

For certainly the Evil that we do not, according to our utmost Abilities, resist and prevent, we are in a great measure guilty of our selves.

No pleading Prudentials will avail us at the Day of Judgment, when God comes to call us to an Account for this trayterous Behaviour in his Cause; no dread of great Men, or their Parties; no fear of lessening our Worldly Interest, or spoiling our Preferment; no Shame of being singular, or reckon'd precise, can be pleaded in Abatement, or Extenuation of such Cowardly Apostate Omissions of our known Duty.

Remember the Assurance we have, from our Blessed Saviour, who to such Wretches will be a terrible Judge, that *whosoever is ashamed to confess him before Men, shall be disowned by him before his Father, which is in Heaven*: And that only the few Names who were left in this dying Church of *Sardis*, who had not *defil'd their Garments*, should walk with him in white, and that because they were worthy; and observe that the Spirit subjoins a Position, or Instruction for all Churches, which shall be in the same Circumstances; *That he, who overcomes, (which implies struggle, and contest in God's Cause) the same shall be clothed in White Raiment, and have his Name, not blotted out of the Book of Life, but confess'd by our Blessed Saviour before his Father, and his Angels*; which plainly implies, that those who are not watchful; who do not endeavour to strengthen the Things which remain, and are ready to die; who do not strive, and struggle heartily, honestly, and bravely in their several Stations against the encroaching Powers of Darkness, shall have their Names blotted out of the Book of Life, and be disown'd at the last Day by the Holy Jesus, before his Father and his Angels.--- A weighry and tremendous Consideration! But alas! Who considers and lays these things to Heart! How many of our Angels, and Watchmen, who are particularly set apart, and commission'd by God and the Constitution, to watch and ward against such Practices, are asleep? How many Shepherds are drowsie and indifferent? How many Persons, who are empower'd and commanded to cry aloud, and spare not, to lift up their Voices like Trumpets, to shew the People their Transgressions, and the House of Jacob their Sins, are struck dumb by a Fit of Worldly Interest, seiz'd with Cowardice and Shivering, got fashionable Agues by some Damps, which have fallen of late, and for want of a Sunny Bank to bask on?

And on the other Hand, how are those, who have Sense enough of their Duty, bravely and honestly to give the Alarm, to set themselves courageously against such Men, and such Practices, in the midst of an *evil and adulterous Generation, who set not their Hearts aright, and whose Spirits are very far from cleaving stedfastly to God*: How, I say, are these Men reproach'd, revil'd, and insulted, not only by the vile Scriblers and Pamphleteers against God, his Church, and his Priests; but discountenanc'd, and Brow-beaten by Men of Figure; not to say more; branded with odious Names and Characters, dress'd up like Mad-men, and expos'd to the Fury of the unthinking Populace, who won't be, or at least seldom are, at the Pains to consider, that they are not the inconsiderable Persons, but the High Offices of such Men, which are expos'd, and struck at by them; not the Man, but the Function; not the frail Earthen Vessel, but the Heavenly Treasure in it; not the Doctor or Vicar, but the Envoy and Ambassador from the Great King of Heaven, with whom such Men are at Enmity, and whose Orders and Ordinances, and Ministers they despise and vilifie.

Here then, my Brethren, is the Source of the General Wickedness, Lewdness, and Impiety of the Nation; here is the Mass of Guilt, which sits heavily upon this Church, and Kingdom; and which will, nay, which must sink them both into Ruin and Desolation; if every one of us, for one does not lessen the Load, by withdrawing by a timely Repentance and Reformation, what either by his Practice or Connivance, or Indifferency, he has contributed to the Heap,

Don't let us foolishly imagine, because God is pleas'd to give us Glorious Successes Abroad, and to Bless us with a Pious Queen at Home, (whose precious Life, God, in his Mercy to these Churches and Nations, long preserve) that therefore he is at Peace with us; whilst thus *the whole Head is Sick, and the whole Heart is Faint*: And though the Queen, Lords, and Commons, resolve over and over again, that the Church is in no Danger, under her Majesties Administration, that therefore we are safe and secure in our Impieties, and Abominations, against the avenging Hand of Heaven; such Thoughts are too foolish to enter into the Heart of any thinking Person. These great Favours may be the last Efforts, and Overtures of Mercy to us, and if we go on to abuse them, God can in an Instant visit us with as great Judgments; for as we have found his Arm not so shortned, that he could not Save; so we may be sure his Hand is not so weakned, that he cannot Punish. And there is the more Reason to fear, since neither the sight of the Rod, which he shook over us for a while; nor the many Blessings, he has from time to time shew'd down upon us; nor the miraculous Interpositions of his Providence, which he has shewed in our Rescue, and Preservation

Preservation, has prevailed upon us, to make him suitable returns of Duty and Service. That in his Just Wrath he may give us up to a State of Security and Hardness of heart, as he did *Pharoah*, whom for this very purpose he raised up; that he may after shew his Power and Justice in his Destruction, *Come upon us as a Thief in the Night*, as he threatned the Church of *Sardis*; and it may be a great part of our Misery, and Punishment, as it was of theirs, *that we shall not know the Hour in which he will come upon us.*

And let us not vainly imagine, and falsely Judge, from the Crowds of People in our Churches, on the more Solemn Days of Worship, (for Gods knows we have few enough at other times) that there is a mighty Multitude, who are better disposed, and free from this general Taint.

For alas! if we seriously consider, and observe that the Churches in this City, and Suburbs can't contain the Twentieth Part of the Inhabitants; that a great many of those, who do help to fill them, are Men very Indifferent to all Religion, at the best of Latitudinarian Principles; who come for Fashion-sake, and out of civil Deference to the Religion of the Country, without having any Concern for, or Regard to Christianity in their Hearts; others to Qualifie themselves for Employments, and to hard among those, who are to share the Offices of Trust, and Profit in the State; and Lastly, a great many Watch, and Spy, and lie upon the catch for the Slips, or Indiscretions of the Preacher, or to make them for him, with Resolution Maliciously to turn, improve, and report, every thing to the Dis-service of our Holy Religion, and to furnish the hired paltry Scribblers of the Party with Dirt to throw at us, and our Holy Profession; as soon as we come out of the Pulpit and Church. Wretches of this sort are to be met with every Day, who bear the Port, and make the Appearance of Gentlemen; who pretend to be of our Church and Communion; who either to set up for Men of singular Thought, or uncommon Understandings, (for common Holiness they don't pretend to) lay out themselves and their little Talents to this low, and villanous Purpose; an Employment (for such I fear it is) below a Man of any Honour, or Honesty, not to say Christianity, and which should be left like other scandalous Offices, for the Refuse of Gaols, and Scares from Gallows. I say, if these several sorts of People be Subtracted from our Congregations, what a small Number shall we have left *zealous for the Lord*, to stand in the Gap against the Judgments, which the Practices of the rest loudly call for from Heaven?

To conclude, we for our parts can do no more than lay before you plainly, and honestly, the Sin and Danger, and beg you seriously to lay them to Heart, and in your several Stations, *to be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, and that are ready to Dye; to remember*

remember what you have received, and heard, and to hold fast, and repent : and then our Iniquity will not be our ruin.

And as to the Clergy, who, as they are most concern'd and oblig'd to preserve the Purity of Christianity, amongst the Flocks committed to their Charge, and to set themselves boldly *against every Evil Way*, I must confess I am at a loss, to account for the little or no Notice taken of these Practices, by those of them, who are obliged by their Order, and high Stations in the Church, *to punish Wickedness and Vice, and to maintain God's true Religion and Virtue*, against all Corrupters and Opposers.

Sure there is at least so much Power left in their Hands, as to enable them to declare against such Tenets, and Practices, and to Brand the Authors and Actors of them with Ecclesiastical Censures ; and to warn their Flocks of the Sin and Danger of Converseing with them, and the Civil Power of putting them into Places of Dignity and Trust ; and no doubt, Interest enough in the Civil Administration to engage that by Humble, yet Affectionate and Zealous Remonstrances, to interpose the Arm of the Magistrate to Rescue, and Preserve the Doctrines and Orders, and Ordinances of our Holy Religion, from the Visible, and Notorious Attempts of such Men, to Undermine and Destroy them.

I am sure the Spiritual Authority, might have been exercised against such Men and such Practices, even in a State of Persecution. And nothing but a want of Zeal ; or an immoderate Fear to offend or displease Great Men, who may be thought the Fautors, and Abettors of such Doctrines and Practices, can easily be imagined the Reason why Her Majesty, the Parliament, the Judges, the Magistrates of the Land, are not zealously apply'd to, either by the Body of the Clergy in *Convocation*, or the Great Men in the Church, who have her Majesties Ear, to put a full, speedy, and effectual stop to such thriving, flagrant, and fatal Mischiefs.

This Reason will not, be sure, be own'd by any of us; much less will it be own'd, that so long as we can keep our Dignities and Revenues, we are to wait for a more seasonable Opportunity to Oppose the Enemies of Christianity, and recover it from those Disorders which are ready to seize its very Vitals. (Though perhaps, this may be some Folks Consideration.)

But a conscientious Clergyman will rather trust to the Providence of God for his Bread, be an honest *Door-keeper in the House of the Lord*, than sneakingly, treacherously, and complyingly, dwell in State, *amidst the Tents of Ungodliness* : God is able to defend, and preserve his Church ; but it is every good Christian's Duty, *to come to the help of the Lord against the Mighty* ; or, with the Inhabitants of *Meroz*, *we shall be cursed bitterly*. Let us then discharge our Duty, and good Consciences in our several Stations, and

and leave the Event to Almighty God, resting assur'd, that whatever it be in this World, as to our temporal Concerns and momentary Interests, we shall have the Confort in the next, of *having been found faithful in our Generations*; and though *Heaviness may endure for a Night, Joy will come in the Morning*; the Tempest will blow over, or we shall get through it, and *shine like Stars in the Firmament with our God in Glory*. To conclude all; since our heartiest Endeavours, without the Divine Grace and Assistance, will be vain and ineffectual, Let us, Clergy and Laity, unanimously join in Prayer to Almighty God for the Preservation of his Church, in her Collect for the 16th Sunday after Trinity,

O Lord, we beseech thee, let thy continual pity cleanse and defend thy Church; and because it cannot continue in Safety without thy Succour, preserve it evermore by thy Help and Goodness, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

To whom with Thee and the Holy Spirit, three Persons and one God, be ascrib'd, as is most due, all Honour, Praise, Might, Majesty and Dominion, this time forth and for evermore. Amen.

F I N I S.

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